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ABSTRACT

This report describes the need for arrangements between public postsecondary colleges and institutes and accredited private training institutions in British Columbia (Canada) to recognize the courses, programs, and credentials of the other. It also recommends a policy statement, eight criteria which must be met by agreements, and 17 principles and guidelines to govern the negotiating agreements for adoption by the Ministry and Center for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2). Criteria include: (1) institutional autonomy; (2) accreditation; (3) quality; (4) course, program, and institutional fit; (5) faculty involvement; (6) educational approval; (7) centralized and accessible records; and (8) review. Private training institutions' courses or programs will be recognized by a provincial policy that is applied on a consistent, system-wide basis so that learners' interests are safeguarded. The private training institution should be registered with and accredited by the Private Postsecondary Education Commission. This report ends with a discussion of five issues significant to the success of articulation: (1) exceptions and how to deal with them; (2) strategies to increase institutional effectiveness; (3) costs; (4) system-level coordination; and (5) evaluation. Appendices contain a list of working committee members, terms of reference, the Private Postsecondary Education Commission accreditation process, and glossary of terms. (JA)

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ED 450 820

Report of the Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements

December 1997

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements was established by the Ministry and the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2). The Working Committee was directed to develop a policy framework and criteria to govern the establishment of formal arrangements between public post-secondary colleges and institutes and accredited private training institutions to recognize the courses, programs and credentials of the other. This report describes the need for such agreements, and recommends the following for adoption by the Ministry and C2T2:

(1) a policy statement,

(2) eight criteria or necessary conditions which must be met by agreements, and

(3) 17 principles and guidelines to govern the negotiation of agreements. The report also provides a detailed "checklist" to assist those who are given responsibility for negotiation.

It ends with a discussion of six critical issues which lie outside the Working Committee's terms of reference, but which seem nevertheless to be of significance for the success of articulation; moreover, these issues are of importance to the broader goal of bringing the public and private post-secondary systems into a relationship of closer cooperation.

We wish to thank all the members of the Working Committee for their active participation in the discussion, debate, analysis, and agreement that produced this report, and for their willingness to listen to each other's viewpoints. Judi Stevenson assisted us greatly as writer and editor of the draft report. As well, we would like to acknowledge the twenty-five individuals and institutions who responded to the draft report with comments and suggestions for change, many of which have been incorporated into the final report.

Carol Matthews	Scott MacInnis
Co-Chair	Co-Chair
Centre for Curriculum, Transfer & Technology	Ministry of Education, Skills & Training

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I. INTRODUCTION

The mandate of the Working Committee on Public - Private Articulation Agreements was to provide guidance and direction in the development of articulation agreements between private post-secondary institutions and the college, institute and agency system. In order to ensure that the recommendations of this Working Committee were useful and generally supported by those who would ultimately be asked to develop agreements, a draft report was circulated broadly for comment and reaction.

The draft report of the Working Committee was distributed in July 1997 to a wide variety of system

stakeholders. Recipients of the report were asked the following questions:

Do you support the recommendations in the report?

Are there any recommendations you would like to change? How?

A time frame of approximately four months was allotted for the review of the draft report. Twenty-five letters and a number of informal responses were received from Educational Councils, student associations, Institutional Boards, system agencies, union associations, private training associations and individuals from within the public and private post-secondary sector.

In addition, one of the workshops in the recent College, Institute and Agency Forum included a review and discussion of the draft report and of the broader issues of linkages between the private training sector and the public system.

Based on this feedback, the Working Committee made a variety of changes to the original report. The Checklist for Negotiation was expanded slightly as was the description of the accreditation process for private training institutions. The section on Philosophical and Political Issues was edited, expanded and rearranged. Numerous wording changes were made throughout the report to add new information or provide greater clarity.

The vast majority of responses to the report supported the policy, criteria and principles outlined in the report. This was also generally true for most of the recommendations made in those areas that, strictly speaking, were outside the terms of reference of the Working Committee.

The support was not, however, unanimous nor unqualified. For example, concern was expressed by some respondents about allowing any agreements with non-accredited private training institutions. Others felt the cost of negotiating agreements should not be left up to the partnering institutions but should instead be borne entirely by government or by the private training institutions. System-level coordination was interpreted by some as a potential intrusion on institutional autonomy.

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II. BACKGROUND: THE NEED FOR PUBLIC-PRIVATE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

The Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements was convened as a result of policy outlined in Charting a New Course, A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's College, Institute and Agency System (1996). The Working Committee's set task was to provide advice to the Ministry and all parts of the college, institute and agency system on how to move toward a greater degree of "fit" between the public and private providers of education and training. Specifically, the Working Committee was asked to recommend a policy framework and criteria to guide and encourage credential recognition between public and private providers.

Like *Charting a New Course*, this report is the result of a positive partnership among the constituents of the system.

It was co-chaired by staff from the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2) and the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training, and it included representatives from:

•the B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT)

•the College/Institute Educators Association (CIEA)

•the B.C. Government and Service Employees Union (BCGEU)

•the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC)

•the public post-secondary college, institute and agency sector

•the private post-secondary education and training sector.

(See Appendix I for a list of working committee members.)

The Working Committee interpreted its assignment broadly, as one of contributing to the development of coherent pathways to help students navigate their way through the various opportunities for advanced education and training available to them as lifelong learners in who reside in B.C. The first phase of the Working Committee's work led to detailed terms of reference, reproduced in Appendix II of this report.

Articulation

In recent years, as part of a strategy to respond to the needs and views expressed by learners, employers and the general public, the Ministry has been moving to create a "seamless" post-secondary learning system, in which learners can attain the skills and competencies necessary for successful employment as well as the knowledge, understanding and values necessary for full and active citizenship. The Ministry has sought to do this, in part, by facilitating the development of new ways for students to combine the course and credential offerings of separate institutions and sectors.

Several agencies (such as the C2T2 and the BCCAT) and initiatives (such as PLA) have been put in place to facilitate the flow of students between institutions in the college, institute and agency system. But the need to help students move easily between learning sites does not stop there. It must also encompass appropriate course, program and credential offerings in the private post-secondary sector.

Articulation, the subject of this report, has been defined in practical terms as the development and implementation of agreements that provide for inter-institutional transfer credit for courses or programs (Charting a New Course, 80). Articulation agreements are formal contracts or informal arrangements between cooperating schools, colleges, institutions or agencies which set out the terms under which credits or credentials awarded by one will be given transfer credit status by the other. They are generally negotiated by instructors in the relevant departments of the cooperating institutions, and approved by their governing structures.

The advantages of articulation agreements are many:

•They allow sending institutions to offer their students a wider array of educational opportunities than

they can deliver directly.

•They increase the potential student intake for receiving institutions, while enabling them to satisfy themselves that the course content and learning outcomes achieved by transferring students meet their needs and standards.

•Most importantly, they give the students of British Columbia access to an increasingly integrated post-secondary education system, in which all forms of learning are recognized and validated.

The New Environment for Post-secondary Education

A combination of factors has encouraged the Ministry to promote articulation. The pressure from post-secondary students, especially adult learners, for access to courses of study which further their employment prospects as well as their general education, without duplication of learning contents or requirements, is one factor. The climate of fiscal constraint, which has put pressure on public educators to look for new ways to grow and change with the times, is another. Meanwhile, the size, strength and sophistication of private sector institutions have been increasing steadily. Under these circumstances, the Ministry has found it logical to promote partnerships across sectoral boundaries.

The goal of the seamless post-secondary education and training system is a challenging one, and will not be met without stress. As it stands, the system has many component parts, and they do not mesh fully or smoothly. Participants do not agree on everything, but most share a commitment to the aim of greater student access and enhanced system flexibility&emdashwith no compromise in the standards of teaching and learning.

In this regard it is important to stress that the initiatives which grew out of Charting a New Course, of which this is one, were initiatives for the college, university college and institute system, not for the university system. The recommendations in this report are, therefore, not directed at universities, although they may find the discussion interesting and the recommendations helpful. Private institutions who wish to be considered for university transfer status, that is, to have their courses accepted for transfer credit at one of our universities and to be listed in the B.C. Transfer Guide, must apply to The University Presidents' Council and successfully meet the requirements of the university and transfer credit process.

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This Report

To steer the process by which credits and credentials from private training institutions can be recognized by the college, institute and agency system, Charting a New Course included the following guidelines:

Private training institutions' courses or programs will be recognized by provincial policy that is applied on a consistent, system-wide basis so that learners' interests are safeguarded...

Credentials offered by private trainers for specific courses and programs will be recognized by the college, institute and agency system if the following criteria are met:

•The private training institution is registered with and accredited by the Private Post-Secondary

Education Commission; and •Curriculum standards and learning outcomes are assessed against the criteria developed by the British Columbia Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology. Responsibility for establishing credential recognition and articulation of private training programs with public programs will be delegated to local colleges and institutes, subject to confirmation that their procedures meet the criteria established by the provincial policy framework.

-Charting a New Course, 39

Working within these guidelines, the Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements has developed the following recommendations:

•In Section III, we recommend a draft policy statement for the Ministry to consider adopting.

•In Section IV, we recommend a set of criteria that outline the necessary conditions upon which the articulation agreements should be based.

•In Section V, we recommend principles and guidelines for institutions seeking to articulate courses or programs.

•In Section VI, we recommend the use of a detailed checklist to assist those who are conducting the negotiations.

•Finally, in Section VII, we outline a series of critical issues which are beyond our mandate to resolve, but which we believe must be addressed before articulation can be fully successful, or the goal of the seamless post-secondary system attained.

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III. RECOMMENDED POLICY STATEMENT

In light of the previous discussion and the policy framework set out in Charting a New Course, the Working Committee recommends that the Ministry adopt the following policy statement to govern articulation agreements between public and private post-secondary education and training providers:

To enhance educational opportunities for British Columbians and avoid unwarranted duplication of learning, the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training supports and encourages the development of articulation agreements between private training institutions which are registered with and accredited by the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission and public post-secondary institutions within the college, institute and agency system.

These articulation agreements must adhere to the criteria, principles and guidelines developed for this purpose by the Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements. Transfer credit must be based on clearly demonstrable equivalencies, and should focus on learning outcomes and learner competencies. Wherever possible, articulation agreements should involve credentials or the block transfer of program credit.

The negotiation and specification of articulation agreements will be the responsibility of the participating institutions, and will be entirely voluntary for both parties.

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IV. RECOMMENDED CRITERIA FOR PROVINCIAL POLICY ON CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION

The Working Committee recommends that the Ministry and institutions in the private post-secondary and public college, institute and agency systems adopt the following broad criteria as necessary conditions for the recognition by one institution of credits and credentials granted by another:

4.1 Institutional Autonomy

Charting a New Course encourages colleges and institutes in the public system to respond to the changing needs of learners by eliminating unnecessary barriers within the post-secondary education and training system as a whole.

The Strategic Plan also recognizes that teaching institutions have their own governing and decision-making structures. Accordingly, it delegates the responsibility for establishing credential recognition and articulation agreements with private providers to local colleges and institutes, acting within the framework of Ministry policy.

4.2 Accreditation

According to Ministry policy, institutions in the college, institute and agency sector should require private institutions with which they are partnering to be registered and accredited by the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC). Details of the PPSEC accreditation process can be found in Appendix III.

At this time, only a minority of private education and training providers are accredited. Many more are expected to go through the process in the next five years, but it is not likely that all private post-secondary providers will become accredited. Nevertheless, some non-accredited providers will want&emdashor may already have&emdasharticulation agreements with institutions in the college, institute and agency sector. This gives rise to the need for policy governing "exceptions" to the rule requiring accreditation. The report will address this matter more fully in Section VII.

4.3 Quality

The major concern of any institution in the college, institute and agency sector which is considering an articulation agreement with a private provider should be to satisfy itself as to the quality of instruction and assessment practices. Accreditation by PPSEC shows that the institution has met certain requirements (see Appendix III for a description). But, by itself, accreditation does not guarantee that the specific courses and programs under consideration for articulation meet standards of instruction, student performance and other dimensions of importance to the receiving institution. Nor does it guarantee "institutional fit" (see below).

The Working Committee has developed a set of principles and guidelines to help ensure that a thorough process of investigation, assessment and mutual accommodation takes place before articulation agreements are concluded.

(See Sections V and VI.)

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4.4 Course, Program and Institutional Fit

Partners to an agreement must satisfy themselves that the contents of courses and programs meant to articulate are matching or complementary, and that teaching, learning and assessment practice standards are equivalent. As well, the partners should ensure that broad institutional objectives are matching, complementary or, at the very least, are not in conflict. To this end, they must examine institutional goals and mission statements.

4.5 Faculty Involvement

It is the teaching faculty of partnering institutions who have the expertise and ability to ensure that appropriate teaching, learning and assessing practices are met in courses and programs slated for articulation. Faculty from the receiving institution must be involved in assessing the curricula of the sending institution to ensure that contents and student learning outcomes are appropriate and equivalent.

4.6 Educational Approval

Articulation agreements must be reviewed by the appropriate departments and committees of both sending and receiving institutions, and must receive the approval of the Education Council and Board, or equivalents, of the institutions participating in the agreement.

4.7 Centralized and Accessible Records

In the interests of openness and accountability, agreements must be recorded and housed centrally in each institution (e.g., in the Registrar's Office). In the interests of clear communication, they must be readily accessible for review by staff and students, and for the guidance and consistency in further agreements.

4.8 Review

Agreements must include periodic review to ensure continued program relevancy and currency. The timetable for routine review must be specified in each agreement, and some provision must be made for the parties to be able to initiate an immediate review in response to exceptional circumstances.

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V. PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE NEGOTIATION OF ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

This section was developed after discussion and review by the Working Committee of several documents intended to accomplish similar purposes elsewhere. These included the principles and guidelines for transfer published by the B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer, the draft Standards and Guidelines for Prior Learning Assessment, and a number of publications from other jurisdictions. Accordingly, the Working Committee recommends that the following principles and guidelines be adopted to facilitate and govern articulation agreements between private training institutions and those in the public college, institute and agency system:

1. The primary purpose of transfer among post-secondary institutions is to increase student access to post-secondary education by facilitating student mobility.

2. Any college, university-college or institute in the British Columbia post-secondary system may voluntarily seek to enhance accessibility by planning for, and accepting as transfers, students who have completed a portion of their post-secondary studies at a private institution in B.C.

3. In any transfer arrangement, the academic integrity of the individual institutions and programs must be acknowledged, protected and preserved.

4. Awarding of transfer credit or recognition of credentials from private institutions will be governed by the policies and regulations of the Education Councils and Boards of the public institutions concerned and will conform to the policy, criteria and principles laid out in this provincial framework.

5. Transfer credit must be based on equivalency of content, learning outcomes and assessment practices.

6. An articulation agreement does not guarantee a student's admission to a receiving institution; rather it specifies the conditions under which transfer credit is awarded if admission is granted. Receiving institutions will apply their usual admission criteria.

7. If transfer arrangements are to be effective, students, prior to beginning their programs at sending institutions, must be provided with information as to course equivalencies, program prerequisites, assessment practices and levels of achievement on which admission to and awarding of transfer credit at receiving institutions will be based. In the case of reciprocal agreements, both institutions assume this responsibility.

8. Receiving and sending institutions must maintain open and regular communication with respect to the conditions of the articulation agreement. Institutions should not make changes in these conditions without consultation with the articulating partner.

9. An institution planning changes to its curriculum which may affect the requirements for credit transfer should inform partner institutions, as well as the members of the relevant articulation committees, as far in advance as possible so that other institutions can consider their response, including if necessary the feasibility of alterations to their courses and programs. Until others have been notified of changes and given adequate time to respond, institutions have an obligation to

fulfill the commitments of current course outlines or transfer agreements. Changes which do not affect overall program outcomes may require little or no adjustment on the part of sending institutions.

10. An articulation agreement refers only to the institutions which have negotiated it, and has no currency outside those institutions. Sending institutions must be careful to inform students intending to transfer of this limitation.

11. Notwithstanding item #10 above, and while it is recognized that all public institutions have the right to decide whether or not to accept courses or programs from accredited private institutions for transfer credit, public institutions asked to give such credit to courses or programs accepted by a sister institution should take into account that a thorough examination of the private sending program was conducted to the satisfaction of the public receiving program.

12. Recognizing that student flow may occur in either direction, agreements will normally result in reciprocal credit transfer.

13. Although formal negotiations shall take place via the designated authorities at each institution, discussions concerning course content, adequacy of supporting facilities and related matters will generally occur first at the department or faculty level.

14. Negotiations between institutions regarding equivalency should recognize that effective learning can occur under a variety of arrangements and conditions. Various methods of demonstrating equivalency of learning outcomes may be employed, particularly for career programs: for example, competency tests, challenge exams and other forms of assessment, eg. portfolio development. Equivalency may be achieved at the course or program level, and/or through bridging or laddering arrangements.

15. An institution which denies the transfer of credit requested by another institution should state the reasons for the refusal.

16. Suspension or loss of PPSEC accreditation by the private institution will result in the automatic review of its articulation agreements with public institutions.

17. All agreements between a public college, university-college or institute, and a private post-secondary institute, must be centrally housed in each partnering institution (for example, in the Registrar's office), and one copy forwarded to a central database at C2T2.

VI. CHECKLIST FOR NEGOTIATION

The Working Committee has developed the following checklist as a tool to assist public institutions in making their way through the negotiation and assessment process. It is not intended that partners to an agreement must follow every step in the checklist. Rather, the list is provided as a set of helpful suggestions, to be used at the discretion of the institutions and programs involved.

Preparing for the Agreement

- Is the private organization accredited by the Private Post Secondary Education Commission?
- Have you consulted with the appropriate individuals/groups within your organization?
- Have you received the necessary internal approval to proceed?
- Have you evaluated the cost to your organization of proceeding with the development of an agreement?
- What type of articulation will you seek? NOTE: Transfer of credit can include the following categories:

  i) Specific equivalent of a given course (assigned credit);

  ii) Unassigned (elective) credit in a discipline or department;

  iii) Unassigned (elective) credit in a faculty or program;

  iv) Unassigned (elective) credit for courses not identifiable with course offerings but which are evaluated as being appropriate for credit or transfer;

  v) Block transfer of entire programs, which may include course-to-course equivalencies, or assessment of block credit.

- Have you checked the central database (to be housed at the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology) for similar agreements?
- Has the private institution provided you with copies of articulation agreements they may have with other public post-secondary institutions?
- Whom have you selected to lead the articulation process?
- Who will perform the detailed articulation (i.e. examination of course content, student learning outcomes, assessment practices, etc.)?
- Is there an internal committee which must review results? If so, has it been alerted?
- Will the agreement affect multiple campuses? If so, are the appropriate authorities informed?
- Does the course or program to be articulated have links with licensing bodies? If so, have they been consulted?
- Does the course/program have links with professional bodies? If so, have they been consulted?
- Does the course/program have links with other public institutions (e.g. universities)? If so, have they been consulted?
- Who at your institution must approve the agreement before it goes to Education Council (or equivalent) for final approval?
- Have you established a timetable by which the agreement will go to Education Council (or equivalent) for
- final approval? NOTE: Education Councils and Boards must approve jointly your articulation agreement. See Bill 22, 14.3 (1)(a)(i).

Establishing Course, Program and Institutional Fit

- What is the mission or mandate of the other institution?
- What is the purpose of the course(s) or program(s) under consideration for articulation?
- What are the intended outcomes of the course(s) or program(s), e.g. employment, job preparation, skills

- development, etc.?
- What connections to employers has the institution, program or course established?
- Is program content and purpose guided or supported by an external advisory group?
- Are the institution's general facilities supportive of learning? (e.g. Are there adequate learning resources? student support services?)
- What qualifications does the organization require of its instructors:

  •academic credentials?

  •teaching credentials?

  •teaching experience?

  •related industry experience?

  •assessment practices?

- Does the institution provide opportunity for faculty professional development?
- Is equipment used by the course/program appropriate and sufficiently current?
- Is software used by the course/program appropriate and sufficiently current?
- What is the length of the course/program?
- What content is covered?
- Is there an appropriate match with your course or program content?
- Is the content covered to the same depth?
- What teaching or content delivery methods are used?
- What are the usual class sizes?
- What assessment practices are used?

  •Are they clearly related to the goals and objectives of the courses or program?

  •Are they proven to be effective in assessing student learning outcomes?

- Can the institution demonstrate a history of success as measured by student learning and employment outcomes (e.g. through official records, student surveys, etc.)?
- Can the institution provide you with student attrition and placement data?

Finalizing the Agreement

- Have you exchanged site visits with the other institution?
- Does the agreement specify an official implementation date?
- Does the agreement specify a renewal date?
- Does the agreement contain terms by which either party may terminate the agreement?
- Does the agreement specify regular review? NOTE: Substantive changes to curriculum, program/course length, delivery methods, equipment, outcomes, etc. may require you to review the agreement.
- Does the agreement specify a process to exchange relevant information which may affect the agreement after it is signed and before the next scheduled regular review?

- Is the agreement reciprocal; that is, are terms specified whereby students can move between institutions in either direction? NOTE: Articulation agreements, whenever possible, should be reciprocal.
- Will the agreement apply retroactively to accommodate graduates of either organization's articulated program(s)?
  If so, for what period of time?
- What will you do if you decide not to complete an articulation agreement? NOTE: You must be prepared to state reasons.
- Who will sign the agreement for each institution?

After the Agreement is Signed

- Have you sent a copy of the agreement to (a) your Registrar's Office, (b) PPSEC and (c) the central database housed at the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology? (d) if appropriate, the chair of the provincial articulation committee (information available from BCCAT)?
- Who in your institution must be made aware of the agreement, e.g. the Registrar, counselling services, etc.?
- Who will maintain links with your partner institution for purposes of coordination or making change to the agreement?

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VII. EMERGING ISSUES AND FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements was asked to:

•develop policy recommendations to govern the establishment of articulation agreements between public colleges, university colleges, institutes, agencies and accredited private training institutions;

•develop a set of recommended criteria for the assessment of courses and programs to be included in credential recognition agreements between such institutions.

Working Committee members saw the need to expand our terms of reference (see Appendix II) to include recommendations for standards and guidelines designed to assist interested post-secondary institutions in the work of formulating their agreements. Sections II-VI of this report complete these tasks. However, in the course of our discussions, we identified a number of major policy issues not included in our terms of reference nor easily added to them. These issues have significant consequences for the linkage between course and program offerings in public and private post-secondary institutions and hence, the flow of students. If unaddressed, they will affect and may restrict student access to the full range of education and training opportunities available in B.C.

Working Committee members agreed that these issues should be drawn to the attention of the Ministry and the wider post-secondary education community. By raising them, we believe we can extend the usefulness of our work by encouraging our colleagues to acknowledge and debate some of the key challenges facing public and private education and training institutions as the new millennium

approaches.

These issues are of two sorts: first, practical matters of successful articulation which our terms of reference did not foresee; second, broader philosophical and political issues affecting the relationship between the public and private post-secondary sectors.

The practical issues which we wish to raise are:

- •exceptions and how to deal with them
- •strategies to increase the effectiveness of student transitions
- •costs
- •system-level coordination
- •evaluation.

7.1 Exceptions and How to Deal with Them

The terms of the Working Committee's mandate directed us to recommend a framework which would encourage clear and consistent articulation agreements between institutions in the college, institute and agency sector and private post-secondary institutions registered with and accredited by the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission. According to the Private Post-Secondary Education Act, PPSEC has responsibility for:

ensuring that standards of integrity and educational competence are met by accredited institutions providing private post-secondary education in the Province.

-S.B.C., Chapter 64, S. 2(1) (b).

(See Appendix III for more details about the PPSEC process.)

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Accreditation is a powerful tool for the protection of educational standards and therefore the proper starting point for what Charting a New Course calls the need to "safeguard" the interests of the post-secondary education system and its students. However, only a small proportion of the 1,100 private training institutions now registered with PPSEC are also accredited.

The current push toward accreditation of private training institutions is relatively new. Individual establishments are only beginning to enter the process, which is a time-consuming one. Within five years, many more will have completed it. They are drawn to do so, in part, because accreditation will, by 01 August 2000, become a condition of eligibility for the receipt of student assistance. The recommended policy and criteria in this report, if adopted, will also serve to encourage private training institutions to accredit in order to attract students who wish to proceed on to the college, institute and agency system. For these and other reasons, there is growing momentum toward accreditation among private providers. Even so, accreditation remains voluntary, and it is unlikely that all of the private

providers wishing to negotiate articulation agreements with public colleges and institutes will soon&emdashor perhaps ever&emdashbecome accredited.

Private education and training providers choose to be registered but not accredited for a number of good reasons:

•Since PPSEC conducts the accreditation process on a cost-recovery basis, the price tag is too high for some.

•Some private providers may fall outside the purview of PPSEC, (for example, unions and professional associations such as the Chartered General Accountants, private employers when training their own staff, Corrections Canada when delivering courses in the prison system, other private providers which are governed by their own regulatory legislation).

•Out-of-province and out-of-country educational institutions which are accredited where they originate must register with PPSEC, but may choose to avoid multiple accreditation.

Thus, the Working Committee believes that there are grounds to consider exceptions to the policy framework provided by Charting a New Course and embedded in our terms of reference, which limits public post-secondary institutions to articulation agreements with accredited private providers only.

Further, there are at least two other kinds of exceptional circumstances to consider. First, some articulation agreements may be informal and limited in scope, operating at the level of departments and their courses. They may well have validity separate from the accreditation status of their parent institutions. Second, some public institutions may have articulation agreements with non-accredited private providers already in place. If these agreements are working well and are considered beneficial by both parties, the policy and procedures recommended here should not cast doubt on their legitimacy.

The Working Committee fully endorses accreditation as the starting point for articulation agreements under normal circumstances. To this end, we urge PPSEC to review its procedures in order to ensure that they are as efficient, user-friendly, cost-effective and thus inclusive as they can be.

At the same time, we acknowledge that there are circumstances in which articulation agreements in the absence of accreditation may be desirable. In such circumstances, the policy and procedure presented in this report could be used to guide and ensure good articulation agreements with non-accredited private institutions, just as with accredited ones. Thus, the Working Committee recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7.1.1

That, under normal circumstances, institutions in the public college, institute and agency sector enter into articulation agreements only with private post-secondary providers which are registered with and accredited by PPSEC.

RECOMMENDATION 7.1.2

That, in exceptional circumstances, when a public institution decides to negotiate an articulation agreement with a non-accredited private institution or provider, the framework set out in this report be used to ensure equivalence in teaching and learning standards and institutional compatibility between

articulating partners.

RECOMMENDATION 7.1.3

That, where an institution in the public college, institute and agency sector has an existing articulation agreement with a non-accredited private provider, the parties undertake a thorough review of its terms in the light of the policy, criteria and guidelines in this report, and take action to ensure that they conform.

7.2 Strategies to Increase the Effectiveness of Student Transitions

The college, institute and agency system was encouraged, in Charting a New Course, to find ways of enabling students to better navigate the system while absorbing the best it has to offer&emdashregardless of place of learning and with no loss of quality in the learning or credits they attain. Apart from the criteria for articulation agreements presented in this report, the Working Committee identified several other mechanisms for achieving effective transitions within the post-secondary learning system. They are:

•block transfer

•learning outcomes assessment

•reference to industry standards

•second order transfer credit.

Block transfer is the process by which a "chunk" of credits is granted by a receiving institution to students who have successfully completed a cluster of courses in a sending institution. To be eligible for block transfer, courses must have educational wholeness or integrity, and relate in a meaningful way to a degree, diploma or certificate program.

Block transfer makes possible the efficient movement of credits between institutions, and offers a way out of the time-consuming process of course-by-course assessment for the purpose of articulation agreements. It offers students the chance to plan transitions which build on coherent programs of study at more than one institution. It offers the institutions a chance to coordinate their disparate offerings into a meaningful pathway to a credential. Thus it contributes to increased student flow between and among institutions, and to greater equity of access for students from all backgrounds.

The Working Committee supports the concept of block transfer, and recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7.2.1.

That institutions contemplating articulation explore the possibility of using block transfer or credential recognition as a preferred strategy.

A second strategy for achieving effective transitions is outcomes-based assessment. Outcomes-based assessment focuses on the knowledge, skills, and sometimes attitudes learned by the student, rather than simply 'time in course'. It encourages all educators to set clear goals, and measure student achievement in concrete terms. Outcomes-based assessment provides meaningful feedback to the student, other

education and training providers, governments and the public at large.

The Working Committee agrees that transitions will be more effective if they are based on this form of assessment. Consequently, the Working Committee recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7.2.2

That, in the development of articulation agreements, cooperating institutions in the public and private sectors use assessment methods based on learning outcomes and share their assessment practices as part of the development of an articulation agreement.

A third strategy for achieving effective transitions is the use of assessment criteria which will be recognized and respected in the labour market. This is a continuing trend in the both public and private sectors, brought about by increased appreciation of the employment goals of students and the legitimate expectations of employers. To reinforce this trend, the Working Committee recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7.2.3

That, whenever possible, cooperating institutions refer to industry or licensing body standards in the assessment of each other's offerings and the achievements of transferring students.

Finally, although every institution in the college, institute and agency system may choose to negotiate independently with every private institution seeking an articulation agreement, it is obvious that this would involve much duplication of effort. Where one pair of partnering institutions has followed a careful and rigorous process to establish equivalencies (e.g., the process laid out in this report), other institutions may choose to follow their lead. They may choose simply to base their equivalencies on the assessment made by one or the other of the first pair, or follow an abbreviated assessment process to confirm key aspects of the articulation agreement between them. Thus, the Working Committee recommends:

RECOMMENDATION 7.2.4

That, where one institution in the college, institute and agency system has entered into an articulation agreement with a private provider, others consider the possibility of second order transfer; that is, similar recognition of that course, program or credential.

In summary, we are proposing that the most effective student transitions will be achieved when transfer is based on "chunks" of educational achievement which are larger than course-level, when assessment is based on learning outcomes, and when industry standards are built into the assessment process. We also propose that second order transfer be considered, where appropriate.

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7.3 Costs

There are significant costs to the parties involved in the negotiation of articulation agreements, measured primarily in terms of staff time. This expenditure can be onerous for institutions in either sector. Further, it may serve as a cause of friction if either party believes the other has more to gain from the agreement

or has more resources with which to pursue it. The Working Committee believes that articulation provides mutual benefits, as we have outlined. To reiterate, articulation allows private institutions to offer their students greater access to the post-secondary system as a whole. It ushers more students from a wider range of backgrounds into the college, institute and agency sector. Most of all, it offers a broader and more integrated set of opportunities to students, which is the primary consideration.

The decision to enter into articulation agreements is always up to the autonomous parties. However, cost may be a factor inhibiting the participation of some institutions, particularly in the college, institute and agency sector. We urge institutions to examine their mission statements and draw on their commitment to student satisfaction and success in making their decisions. Further, the Working Committee recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7.3.1

That, in the interests of extending access to all parts of the post-secondary education and training system to the widest possible range of students, education councils and boards of public institutions discuss this report and develop policy guidelines to deal with cost implications.

7.4 System-level Coordination

A number of public-private articulation agreements exist now, and we anticipate more if and when this policy document is adopted. In the interests of greater system-level efficiency, existing agreements should be collected, organized and made available upon request, both to other post-secondary institutions which might want to consult them as "models" for their own agreements, and to students seeking to plan their educational pathways.

To this end, the Working Committee recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7.4.1

That all articulation agreements between public and private post-secondary institutions, present and future, be housed at the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2), and made available to interested parties for reference and consultation.

RECOMMENDATION 7.4.2

That the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC) regularly advise its members of existing agreements.

RECOMMENDATION 7.4.3

That signatories to articulation agreements register contact names from their institutions with C2T2 and PPSEC so that other, interested institutions may consult them for advice in negotiating effective agreements.

7.5 Evaluation

The main purpose of articulation agreements is to foster student access to a wide array of educational

opportunities, and avoid the unnecessary repetition of teaching and learning events. In the pursuit of smooth transitions between public and private post-secondary institutions, faculty and administrative staff in both sectors agree that the quality and relevance of course content in sending institutions must be demonstrated in order to earn equivalencies from the receiving institutions.

We are reasonably confident that the policy, criteria and guidelines proposed in this document will help to ensure the quality and relevance of articulated courses, programs and other credentials. At the same time, we recognize that it is only with some practical experience negotiating agreements under these conditions that we can ascertain their effectiveness. Therefore we suggest that an evaluation of the recommended policy, criteria and guidelines be conducted in the not too distant future.

In this regard, the Working Committee recommends the following:

RECOMMENDATION 7.5.1

That the effectiveness of the policy, criteria and guidelines for articulation adopted by the Ministry and the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology be evaluated after two years of operation.

7.6 Philosophical and Political Issues

The strategic plan in Charting a New Course points the public college, institute and agency system in significant new directions. One of its stated purposes is to support and extend changes which will, over time, eliminate the historic gap between education and training, and give birth to a new learning system which combines the two. Indeed, the Strategic Plan points out that the future of public post-secondary education depends on closer working partnerships among traditional participants&emdashthe community colleges, university colleges, provincial institutes and the Open Learning Agency&emdashand with the growing array of private providers, ranging from large training schools to small community-based agencies and trainers.

In the language of the Strategic Plan:

The Ministry strongly favours an approach of revitalized partnerships.... New alliances [must] be developed with business, labour and other education providers to develop a seamless learning system, providing the flexible, inclusive outcomes-based learning required by modern society.

-Charting a New Course, 28

The people and governments of B.C. and Canada have invested a great deal in the public post-secondary education system over many years. This investment has allowed the system to build extensive physical infrastructure; to nurture and develop the skills of its employees and provide them with career benefits; and to successfully educate millions of students. Yet public post-secondary institutions are now being urged to become "partners" with private providers. For some administrators, instructors and staff, this engenders a sense of unease. Their discomfort takes shape around in a number of concerns:

•Some see the private education and training sector in terms of simple competition: for funding dollars and student enrollment numbers. Indeed, private providers are receiving a growing share of the "pie", and public educators are being pushed to create private entrepreneurial divisions to supplement declining government funding, thus blurring the distinction between 'private' and 'public' educational

institutions.

•Some see the private sector as the lucky beneficiary of limited regulation, with lower expenses, a more compliant work force, and more flexible and responsive governing and administrative apparatuses. Thus its institutions are able to respond quickly to the changing needs of the labour market, and offer courses which appeal to learners anxious about their future employability.

•Some see the absence of college-style regulation as leading to lowered standards of teaching and learning in the private sector.

The stipulation in Charting a New Course that articulation agreements should be made with accredited private providers only was intended to quiet these fears. Yet accreditation alone cannot provide the quality controls that those in the college, institute and agency sector are looking for. For that reason, the Working Committee on Public-Private Articulation Agreements has recommended a fairly elaborate body of criteria, principles and guidelines. Our prescriptions are intended to enable potential partners to develop satisfactory terms and conditions for their agreements.

However, we have been unable to address all expressed concerns, for some lie far outside our terms of reference, however broadly interpreted. They result from serious underlying differences between the public and private systems, such as the following:

•Public post-secondary institutions are able to offer many support services to students, including libraries, counselling services, food and recreation facilities and residences. These services are costly to build and maintain. Sometimes, students from private institutions make use of them without fee or recompense. Some people in the public system feel increasingly burdened by this use.

•Public post-secondary institutions are unionized, with collective agreements to provide employees with fair and enforceable terms and conditions of employment. The employees of private institutions are not assured the same level of salary and benefits as those in the public sector. Lowered staffing costs could be described as an "advantage" for private institutions, but it may also be a disadvantage in terms of staff quality. Public sector staff will oppose any attempt by their employers to lower benefit standards for the sake of competition with the private sector.

•Public institutions must submit their curricula to scrutiny by both internal and external examiners. Faculty credentials are thoroughly examined. Furthermore, faculty are given opportunities for professional development and upgrading. Not all private institutions are subject to such accountability measures, nor do they all offer their staff such chances for professional development.

•Public institutions (except the Open Learning Agency) are subject to Bill 22, which establishes a clear structure of governance, involving faculty, staff and students with a responsibility for curriculum, the delivery of courses and programs, and other aspects of the educational experience. There is no similar governance requirement in the private post-secondary sector.

Underlying the specific concerns voiced by public educators, there is a fear that the public and private systems may have incompatible goals and values: those of liberal enlightenment and active citizenship versus those of the global economy as manifest in the demands of local employers. Charting A New Course (page 24) deliberately placed these two long-debated purposes of education in harness together. Its first goal for a redesigned system was "relevance and quality: to provide British Columbians with post-secondary education and training to improve the quality of life and citizenship experienced in the

province and to enhance current and future job opportunities". It seems the only way to move forward in the current conjuncture, but there is no denying that it makes some people in the public system uneasy.

Learners will select the educational programs that they think will best meet their needs, and institutions have a responsibility to help students to move easily between learning sites. Both public and private institutions will need to establish respectful partnerships in order to make this happen. This report attempts to outline a framework and process that will support such partnerships.

We on the Working Committee are reminded of the Chinese symbol for "change" which combines two other symbols: one for "danger" and one for "opportunity". While we would not do justice to our constituents' concerns had we ignored the dangers still ahead, we remain convinced that the opportunities for creative programming and curriculum development abound in the emerging system.

APPENDIX I

LIST OF WORKING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Finola Finlay B.C. Council on Admissions and Transfer

Pat Floyd Private Post-Secondary Education Commission

Paul Hunt Vancouver Community College

Scott MacInnis Ministry of Education, Skills and Training

Carol Matthews Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology

Carol Meyer B.C. Government and Service Employees Union

Thelma Plecas Horizon College

Maureen Shaw College/Institute Educators Association

Norma Strachan Association of Services Providers for Employability and Career Training (ASPECT)

Shawn Witney Private Post-Secondary Education Commission

Susan Witter University College of the Fraser Valley

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APPENDIX II

TERMS OF REFERENCE: WORKING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC-PRIVATE ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS

Scope and Purpose

The Committee is to develop a set of recommended criteria to assess curriculum standards and learning outcomes for courses and programs to be included in credential recognition agreements between public colleges, university-colleges, institutes, agencies and accredited private training institutions.

The Committee is also to develop policy recommendations for the Ministry to govern the establishment of articulation agreements between these types of institutions.

The Committee will recommend standards and guidelines to assist public and accredited private institutions in formulating articulation agreements. These articulation agreements may cover the transfer or recognition of courses, programs or credentials.

The responsibility to develop these agreements will remain with the educational institutions involved in the agreements.

Committee Activities

Toward achieving these purposes, the Committee will:

- collect and review existing agreements between private training institutions and public post-secondary institutions;

- collect and review the written standards and guidelines used for other related initiatives (e.g. PLA);

- identify key issues to be addressed to ensure articulation agreements maintain educational quality and promote access to post-secondary opportunities;

- identify critical policy elements for provincial policy;

- develop draft criteria for evaluating courses and programs to be covered by articulation agreements;

- develop recommended standards and guidelines for institutions wishing to establish articulation agreements;

- circulate draft recommendations to appropriate individuals and groups for review and comment prior to submitting a report to the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology and the Ministry; and,

- identify further work to be done in this area.

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APPENDIX III

THE PRIVATE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION COMMISSION ACCREDITATION PROCESS

The Private Post-Secondary Education Act requires that the Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (the "Commission") establish and apply an accreditation process for registered private post-secondary institutions. The process established by the Commission and applied to institutions as of 1995, is one by which a registered institution seeks recognition of its standards of education competence and integrity.

The process is comprehensive in nature and requires that the institution write a Self-Study report and complete an on-site audit. As it is an institutional accreditation the institution must demonstrate competence in nine key areas. In each of the nine areas the institution must meet the established criteria and within their Self-Study report provide documented evidence. The report is broken down into a series of questions which requires the institution to describe how it meets the criteria; evaluates its policies, procedures and outcomes; and determines what action is required to address weaknesses or to accommodate required changes. The nine areas reviewed in the report are:

- institutional mission, goals and objectives;
- institutional administration;
- educational programs;
- instructors;
- instructional resources and equipment;
- student support services;
- student records;
- physical plant and non-instructional equipment;
- dispute resolution and compliance.

The goals of accreditation at the institution level are to:

- confirm the present performance and achievements of the institution in educational and administrative areas;
- stimulate the institution to discover its strengths and weaknesses through self-study, and act upon the knowledge;
- encourage the institution to work towards more efficient and effective management;

• encourage the institution to view the involvement in accreditation as an on-going developmental process which will lead to higher levels of excellence over the five-year accreditation period.

To validate the contents of the Self-Study report the institution must undergo an on-site audit. Team members for the audit are appointed by the Executive Director of the Commission and are professionals from the private and the public education sectors, or may be an industry representative from the labour market. Each member is carefully chosen according to specific criteria including:

• knowledge of the type of institution being visited;

• expertise in at least one program offered by the institution;

• performance on previous audit teams;

• commitment to the Commission's criteria;

• ability to communicate clearly and objectively;

• demonstration of a high degree of professional and ethical integrity;

• freedom from conflict of interest.

An institution will only be awarded accreditation if the audit team makes a positive recommendation to the Executive Director and, in the opinion of the Executive Director, has successfully demonstrated achievement of all prescribed criteria. Once awarded accreditation, an institution must submit an annual report to confirm that they continue to demonstrate the standard of educational competence and integrity required to maintain the accredited status.

For more information concerning the accreditation process, please contact the Commission office at:

Ste. 405 - 960 Quayside Drive
New Westminster, BC
V3M 6G2
(604) 660-4400
1-800-661-7441 toll free

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APPENDIX IV

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Acronyms

BCCAT British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer.

C2T2 Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology.

PPSEC Private Post-Secondary Education Commission.

Definitions

Accreditation (PPSEC) Successful completion of the PPSEC four-stage accreditation process: application, self-study, audit and approval of accreditation. (See Appendix III for more details.)

Articulation (1) The system used by post-secondary institutions to determine which courses are equivalent to one another. Articulation can involve "course to course" or "program to program" analysis or comparison. (2) The development and implementation of agreements that provide for inter-institutional transfer credit for courses or programs.

Articulation agreement (public/private) A formal agreement between a public institution and a private institution that recognizes and grants credit at one institution for courses or programs taken at the other.

Block transfer [1] The process whereby a block of credits is granted to students who have successfully completed a cluster of courses, or certificate or diploma, which is recognized by the receiving institution as having an academic wholeness or integrity, and which can be related in a meaningful way to part of a broader program or course of study.

British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) The BCCAT was created in 1989 as part of a major government initiative to improve access to post-secondary education, to provide leadership and direction in achieving an overall objective of expanding educational opportunities for students through inter-institution transfer.

Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2) An organization which works with institutions in the college, institute and agency system to facilitate the development of learner-centred, outcomes-based provincial curriculum standards, to ensure effective and efficient transfer, and to advise on the application of education technology.

Challenge exam A test prepared by a course instructor to measure a student's knowledge of course content; this type of exam is used for students who have not attended the course.

College, institute and agency system The system of community colleges, university colleges, provincial institutes and the Open Learning Agency which, in addition to provincial universities,

delivers public post-secondary education and training in British Columbia.

Course A formal, organized learning experience, usually taught by an instructor from a prepared outline of content and learning outcomes.

Course outline Description of the main content, organization and expected outcomes of a course, normally including the number of credits awarded for successful completion, hours of class time required, evaluation procedures, assignments, texts and readings.

Credential The document acknowledging completion of a particular program or course of study.

Credit The value assigned to a course.

Currency The extent to which learning is valid at the time of assessment or application. In some fields, such as computer technology, currency is particularly important in determining whether or not to award credit.

Equivalency The comparability of two or more learning events.

Flexible assessment Flexible approaches to measuring and evaluating student learning to determine whether credit should be awarded or entry granted. See prior learning assessment.

Laddering Process by which students may gain access to a higher level program from a basic program.

Learning outcomes The knowledge, skills and values that students acquire as a result of their educational experiences.

Prior learning assessment (PLA) Assessment by some valid and reliable means, by a qualified specialist, of what has been learned through non-formal education, training or experience that is worthy of credit in a course or program offered by the institution providing the credit.

Private Post-Secondary Education Commission (PPSEC) 2 The Private Post-Secondary Education Commission is responsible for consumer protection with respect to registered private education and training institutions, and for ensuring that appropriate standards of integrity and educational competence are met by institutions choosing to become accredited.

Receiving institution Those institutions which are being requested to award transfer credit for courses or programs offered by another institution

Reciprocal agreement An agreement by which each of two or more institutions agrees to recognize and grant credit for courses and programs offered by the other(s).

Second Order Transfer Credit Public post-secondary institutions in B.C. require original transcripts for all work completed at all institutions a student has attended in order to make an independent assessment of credit allocation for all courses taken. They will not accept the assessment by another institution of work completed at a previous location. Public institutions in B.C., therefore, do not engage in second order transfer credit assessment.

Sending institution Those institutions which are requesting that their courses or programs be recognized for transfer credit by another institution.

Transfer credit The awarding of comparable credit by a post-secondary institution for course or program credit gained at another post-secondary institution. Transfer credit can also include credit to a program for elective courses.

[1] Definition adapted from F. Finlay, "Block Transfer: Issues and Options", 1997, 1.

[2] Further information and copies of supporting documents can be obtained from PPSEC in New Westminster, phone: (604) 660-3312.